

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Continental Structural Plastics

Manufacturing Extension Partnership of Louisiana

Continental Structural Plastics Improves with Lean

Client Profile:

Continental Structural Plastics (CSP), located in Sarepta, Louisiana, is one of six manufacturing facilities for the Troy Michigan-based corporate headquarters. Sixty percent of the company's compression molded structural products serve the automotive industry, specifically automotive assembly plants for General Motors, Saturn, Nissan, Subaru, Mitsubishi and Mercedes-Benz. A sampling of the products made at the Sarepta facility includes battery trays, automotive underbody panels, bumper beams, residential door skins, and heating/air conditioning bases. CSP employs 180 people.

Situation:

The Sarepta plant's involvement in Lean manufacturing had been well received by their corporate management staff. Director of Operations, Bryce Harrington had researched other tools to implement at CSP Sarepta to further their Lean journey when the company's Human Resources Manager, Jodee Benson, met CJ Smith of the Manufacturing Extension Partnership of Louisiana (MEPOL), a NIST MEP network affiliate, during a workforce development seminar. Harrington said, "My goal was to improve our process flow and the quality of our product through continuous improvement methods. In order to capitalize on some low hanging fruit, we chose MEPOL to provide employee training in 5S techniques."

Solution:

MEPOL conducted two 5S (sort, set, shine, standardize and sustain) classes at the facility. The first class revolved around the radiator support component to a 15-passenger van for one of CSP's largest automotive clients. In this area, CSP improved product quality through use of vision systems to check for hole/slot size and presents, hardware and assembly components. Results of improvements to the line layout eliminated the need for three employees from this process. Harrington is quick to point out that the three employees did not lose their jobs, saying, "I made it very clear to our employees that we weren't conducting this Lean training to displace any employees. Where the results of 5S achieved a reduction in labor on a particular line the employees would simply be moved to other product lines within the facility."

For the second class, CSP chose one of their non-automotive product lines, residential door skins. Through the 5S training, employees identified an opportunity to improve quality in the trimming area. "Instead of sliding the doors on a stationary table to trim the door skins, we installed turntables to rotate the doors, reducing the potential for dents and scratches," said Harrington. "This change has greatly improved the quality of our product and has cut our scrap rate in half in just 30 days."

Results:

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- * Realized \$93,000 in cost savings.
- * Reduced scrap by 50 percent.
- * Invested \$48,000 in workforce development.

Testimonial:

"It was a pleasure working with MEPOL. The training was hands on and the group really seemed to interact well with the instructors. This was quality training that made a huge impact on our 5S program. We would highly recommend MEPOL to anyone interested in introducing Lean manufacturing to their operations."

Bryce Harrington, Director of Operations